REMARKS

Claims 1-10 are all the claims pending in the present application. In summary, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, as set forth in the previous Office Action, have been withdrawn, however the Examiner maintains the previously applied prior art rejections. Specifically, the Examiner maintains that claims 1, 4, and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Owen et al. (US Patent No. 5,841,099). Claims 2, 3, and 6 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Owen an further in view of Hino (US Patent No. 6,037,103). Finally, claim 7 remains rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Owen and Hino and further in view of Kurosawa et al. (US Patent No. 6,373,026).

§102(b) Rejections (Owen) - Claims 1, 4, and 5

The Examiner rejects claims 1, 4, and 5 based on the reasons set forth on page 2 of the present Office Action, and adds new arguments in the *Response to Arguments* section of the Office Action on pages 4-5. Applicants traverse these rejections at least based on the following reasons.

With respect to independent claim 1, in the previous Amendment, Applicants argued that Owen does not disclose or suggest at least, "hardening said insulating layer by applying a laser beam at a lower energy density than said predetermined energy density of the processing step around a processed portion processed in the processing step," as recited in claim 1 (emphasis added). That is, Applicants argued that Owen only irradiates the dielectric layer with a single laser beam (the second laser beam) for material removal purposes, and does not harden a

processed portion of the dielectric layer by applying another laser beam with a lower energy density than the second laser beam, as required by claim 1. Owen simply uses the first laser beam to ablate the metallic layer, and then uses the second laser beam with a lower power density to remove the dielectric layer. The second laser beam removes the entire dielectric layer (col. 8, lines 19-22). Nowhere in the present Office Action, including the *Response to Arguments* section, does the Examiner respond to this particular argument that Owen does not teach or suggest hardening said insulating layer. The Examiner simply states in the *Response to Arguments* section:

> Applicant argues that Owen only teaches a single laser beam and does not disclose a CO_2 laser. The Examiner respectfully disagrees and notes that in one preferred embodiment, a first laser output of high intensity is used to process the metallic layer and a second laser output of equal intensity and greater spot size is used to process an underlying dielectric layer. Conventional CO^2 lasers typically generate laser output wavelengths of about 10.6 um.

There is no mention of the above-quoted (and underlined) limitation of claim 1. Therefore, at least based on the foregoing, Applicants maintain that Owen does not anticipate claim 1.

Applicants submit that dependent claims 4 and 5 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 1.

Further, with respect to dependent claim 5, the Examiner simply states that conventional CO^2 lasers typically generate output wavelengths of about 10.6 micrometers. In response, Applicants submit that the Examiner has not established a prima facie case that the features set forth in claim 5 are disclosed in Owen or would have been known to one of ordinary skill in the art. Owen does not disclose the features set forth in claim 5, and the Examiner's conclusory statement is not sufficient to prove that Owen satisfies the features set forth in claim 5.

Therefore, at least based on the foregoing, Applicants maintain that Owen does not anticipate claim 5.

§103(a) Rejections (Owen / Hino) - Claims 2, 3, and 6

Applicants maintain that dependent claims 2 and 3 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependencies from independent claim 1. Hino does not make up for the deficiencies of Owen. Applicants maintain that independent claims 6 is patentable at least based on reasons similar to those set forth above with respect to claim 1.

§103(a) Rejections (Owen / Hino / Kurosawa) - Claim 7

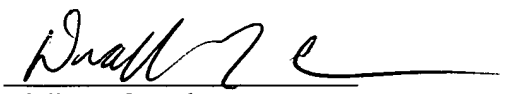
Applicants maintain that claim 7 is patentable at least by virtue of its dependency from independent claim 1. Kurosawa does not make up for the deficiencies of the other cited references.

At least based on the foregoing, Applicants maintain that the claimed invention is patentably distinguishable over the applied references, either alone or in combination.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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